



What Are You Doing Here?

IT'S YOUR CALL

Guidebook

GARY BARKALOW

with Sam Williamson



THE NOBLE HEART

What Are You Doing Here?

IT'S YOUR CALL

Guidebook

GARY BARKALOW

with Sam Williamson



THE NOBLE HEART™

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

Pete Blaber was a commander in the elite Delta Force. He wrote a book about his experience in his book, *The Mission, the Men and Me*. During his time in the military he experienced times when distant generals made ill-informed decisions with disastrous consequences for the men on the ground. Reflecting on these situations, he coined a phrase: *Collect the dots before you Connect the dots*.

It's also true in our personal lives; we often make ill-informed decisions simply because haven't collected enough dots to form an accurate picture.

In this Guidebook we will begin by collecting dots about who we are. Later on we'll start to connect the dots.

Calling is not about title or position. At its core, Calling is about discovering who we really are - our true heart, and then bringing who we are to the world. Our calling is the effect that we bring to others as we live out of our truest self.

This Guidebook is not a theoretical book on the nature of calling; it is a personal journey into discovering who God made us to be.

God wants us to discover who he made us to be, and from our perspective the journey is like reading a mystery novel - we pick up clues along the way. He delights in offering these clues and in our discovering and deciphering them.

Each chapter will ask personal questions on which we can reflect. These questions are meant to provoke deep heart reflection: What do I really love most deeply? Why does that movie capture me? Why do certain comments move me?

As we answer these questions, we are collecting dots.

GOD'S PREPARATION

Fifteen years ago, a client asked me to speak at a conference. The conference topic was on a subject I didn't know—though my client seemed to think I did—but had led other small workshops before, and it wasn't a big deal. So I agreed.

The day before the conference, my client called me to say that he was looking forward to my presentation, because I was the keynote speaker. My heart began to beat a little faster, and I suspect beads of sweat formed on my brow.

I quickly printed five articles that I had googled on the subject, shoved them into my briefcase, and headed out for the airport. I had twenty-four hours to prepare a keynote speech on a subject I knew nothing about.

I almost never talk to people on planes, but the man next to me turned out to be an Ivy League professor at a major university specializing in Public Speaking. I thought this might be a good time to talk with my airline neighbor.

Hoping for free advice that might ease my presentation problems, I asked the professor for the number one key to great public speaking.

He said that the number one key to successful public speaking is to *know* what you are talking about.

I thought, "Great, strike one."

I asked him for the second most important key. He said it was to *love* what you're talking about.

Strike two.

I asked him for the third most important key—hoping I could connect with something. Maybe I'd get a bunt.

Then he told me this story. When Churchill became Britain's Prime Minister at the beginning of World War II, Churchill said that he felt like "his whole life had prepared him for this moment."

The professor said, "*The key to great public speaking is believing that your whole life has prepared you for this moment.*"

This is also the key to understanding our Calling, because God has been preparing us our whole lives for this moment. Then He uses this present moment to prepare us for

our next moments.

It turned out that the subject I was to speak on was exactly what my company's software did; we just gave it a different name. I realized that God had prepared me for that moment. I simply hadn't recognized His preparation.

When it comes to our calling, we may not recognize God's preparation either. David was trained to fight Goliath by shepherding his father's sheep and protecting them with his sling. Though it was not military training, it did prepare him to face the enemy.

COLLECTING DOTS AND GOD'S PREPARATION

God has been preparing us our entire lives to walk into our calling.



Throughout this Guidebook we'll be digging for dots. Each chapter will have questions designed to search for dots that tell us more of who we are. When you see the Digging for Dots symbol, expect questions that pursue the "preparation" God has already done in your life. We simply need to recognize it.



At the end of each chapter, we'll ask you to review various questions and write down what you've learned about yourself - collecting your dots. Toward the end of the book, we'll begin to connect those dots.

BEING ATTUNED TO OUR RESONANCE

If you sing a note into the body of a piano, a string will begin to resonate. You can tell which note you are singing by seeing which string vibrates. The string responds to the stimulus of your voice.

We need to learn how to recognize the resonance in our hearts. Most of us are out of touch with our hearts. We know when we're hungry or thirsty or tired, but we often don't know our deepest longings.

As we work through this Guidebook, let's become aware when something moves us. It may be joy we experience or grief; it may be longing or desire.



We will also ask Alert and Oriented questions which are meant to stir something deep inside - to reawaken a connection to our hearts, to feel the resonance of our heart strings. When you see the Alert and Oriented symbol, remember to ask a question of your heart in the presence of God.

These too are dots that, when connected, will paint the picture of who we are.

WAKING OUR HEARTS

I rarely had a problem understanding what my children wanted (once they could talk). They would blurt out desires without the slightest hint of self-filtering. They told me without hesitation whenever they wanted ice cream or motorcycles or horses or video games or something to eat or allowances.

As adults we learned to filter our speech. While thinking before speaking is a good quality, most of us have gotten to the point where we don't know what we want anymore. Sure, we may want a new car or a new dress, but we've lost touch with the deepest desires of our heart.

God has written the nature of who we are—our Calling—on our heart. Oftentimes our heart is speaking and we don't recognize its voice. Let me suggest a new life habit:

When we sense some movement in our heart, let's dig for understanding.

- ▶ Perhaps the ending of a movie brought tears; ask yourself, "What about that ending moved me?"
- ▶ Or someone says something that hurts deeply; ask yourself, "Why did that hurt, what about that comment caused grief?"
- ▶ Or something that you really wanted to finally happened—like a job promotion or a new house—and you realize you still aren't satisfied; ask yourself, "What is it that I most deeply wanted, that I most deeply long for?"

As we learn to converse with our heart in prayerful reflection, we'll come to see what God has written on it.

So approach this Guidebook with a heart that is coming alive, in joyful anticipation; and ask God to speak to you. He wants you to know your Calling even more than you do.

PREFACE

The first quote—of many quotes—in *IT'S YOUR CALL* is this statement from Oswald Chambers:

“SOAK CONTINUALLY IN THE ONE GREAT TRUTH OF WHICH YOU HAVE HAD A VISION; TAKE IT TO BED WITH YOU, SLEEP WITH IT, RISE UP IN THE MORNING WITH IT. CONTINUALLY BRING YOUR IMAGINATION INTO CAPTIVITY TO IT AND SLOWLY AND SURELY AS THE MONTHS AND YEARS GO BY, GOD WILL MAKE YOU ONE OF HIS SPECIALISTS IN THAT PARTICULAR TRUTH.”

The idea of a person's calling—a unique purpose for each of us—has always fascinated me. It's the reason why I loved my college psychology class even though I didn't want to become a counselor; why I loved marketing classes even though I didn't want to go into marketing; and it is why I devour books on calling, purpose, destiny, focus, intentionality.

My life has been filled with many things that I've wanted to understand, but only one thing has stayed with me – and that is personal calling. And please note, for most of my life my longing to understand personal calling had nothing to do with income, advancement, or approval.



If a learning institution existed that would provide study, training and a degree in any subject or idea in which you are passionate, what would your degree be in? Remember, absolutely any subject or idea, solely based on your inner desire or interest, not based on external needs or marketability.



Some jobs or fields encourage people to have credentials which attest to qualification, competency or authority (i.e. medical, legal, financial, military, and academic). My desired competency might be something like: *Gary Barkalow, Personal Calling.*

What would you like yours to be? What would you want to see after you name; what would cause you to say, *I really want that?*



What do you desire to receive from IT'S YOUR CALL and this Guidebook? What ache, fear, desire, pressure or curiosity do you feel right now?

Examples: (next page)

Aches: I want to do something important / life changing; I want to know who I am – really; I want to be part of something significant.

Fears: I've missed it; it's too late; I'm on "plan B"; God has given up on me; I'm living a selfish, self-centered life.

Desires: I long to find something I'd love to do; I long for a sense of significance; I long to discover who I am.

Pressures: I've got to figure this out now; my spouse or parents want me to get my life together; I've got to find another job.

Curiosities: I love the idea of _____; I always wondered about _____.





Chapter 1

THE WEIGHTINESS OF YOUR LIFE

CALLING IS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE
REORIENTATION AND THE MOST PROFOUND
MOTIVATION IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

–Os Guinness

Fifteen years ago I had a ski accident that damaged my right knee. The Ski Patrol rushed me down the mountain and placed me in the ambulance which rushed me to the emergency room. The doctor strapped my right leg in an “immobilizer” and told me to visit my doctor the following week.

Well, my knee felt better the following week, so I did what most red-blooded males do, I skipped the doctor visit.

Over the next few months—and eventually years—my knee periodically gave out. I'd step on a curb at a bad angle, and my leg would bend sideways, and I'd collapse in pain. Moments later the pain disappeared and I'd pick myself up, dust myself off, and forget the whole thing. I learned to watch more carefully where and how I stepped, I began to wear a knee brace when skiing.

Eventually the episodes occurred more frequently so I visited my doctor. After an MRI my doctor told me my ACL had been completely torn and I needed surgery - which fixed my knee.

I had focused on external aids to avoid pain. I watched where I stepped, I wore a brace when skiing, and I ignored the pain. But these external aids did nothing to fix my internal need.

We need more than external solutions for our internal longings. We need more than a little something extra—like a vitamin supplement or knee brace. We need to know our purpose, meaning, and significance. We need to know that our lives matter.

Reread the first two sections of Chapter 1 (page 19 to the top of page 25).



The question of purpose, meaning, and place is universal to every human heart. The answer that your life does have purpose or meaning is not enough. Instead the answer begs another question, “What specific, irreplaceable purpose does my life play?”



Everyone—and I mean everyone—struggles with the question, “What did God create me to do?” Some may answer, “I have no idea”, while others ask, “Is there really more to me than I currently understand?”

What does your struggle with calling sound like?

Here are a few things I've felt or heard:

God does not speak to me.

I've blown it.

I'm not spiritual enough.

My life is a mess.

My pastor hasn't told me.

I'm too old / young.

I'm not smart enough to figure this out.

I'm not in ministry.

I've not been trained or educated enough.

No one will pay me.

I don't have time.

What is your struggle, what sentences do you hear?



The truth is that we are here to do something, a contribution that only each one of us can make. There is an outcome that hinges on us and therefore a fear that we might miss it—our moment, our part, our potential, our purpose, and our life. This is not some peculiar fear experienced only by a certain generation or culture or religion. I believe it is a fear born out of a desire written on every human heart, a desire for meaning, to know that my existence matters to someone and something. In short, that *I'm good for something*.



Have you ever experienced moments—or even one moment—when you had clarity about your calling, maybe as a result of an assessment that you took, or a scripture that you read, or counsel someone gave you or a prayer time?

When, where and what was your understanding?

When: _____

Where: _____

What: _____



There is a depth—what I call a weightiness—to your life that cannot be released or entered into by way of testing, analysis, goal setting, or determination. Understanding alone, or as the primary approach, cannot do the job.

INGREDIENTS IN A LIFE OF CALLING

Reread the last section of chapter 1 (bottom of page 30 to page 33)

REFLECTION



There is a direction, theme, purpose, and orchestration to our lives that we must recognize and understand if we are to discern the lives we were created to live. It is important that we periodically disengage from our daily busyness and examine our lives. If we are to truly “see” and “hear” our lives, we must get away from all the ambient light and noise, as we would if we were seriously studying the stars.



In the last six months, have you disengaged from your “daily life” for a day or two and looked at your personal story, desires, and journey?

No. Why not? _____

When and where could you do this?

When: _____

Where: _____

Yes. What did you discover?

RISK



We all desire a life that requires something from us, not just our “showing up.” It’s exhilarating to attempt something that is risky, uncertain, *and* important.

Does the day-to-day reality of your life largely feel like, “just showing up?” How much of your day-to-day reality involves “risk, uncertainty, and significance?”

Mostly “just showing up”. Why? _____

Moments of “risk, uncertainty and significance.” What are those moments?

FULFILLMENT



All of us instinctually want to know that there is meaning to our lives and that we add meaning for those around us—that we are living a life of consequence and transcendence.



Honestly, how much of your life feels meaningful, significant, weighty, and influential? Do you sense that your life touches other lives in any important ways?



On page 8, you named a subject or field that you would love to get a degree in and listed a title you'd like to have after your name. Why would you want that degree and title? What is it about them that stirs something in your heart?



From that “moment of clarity” in your life (page 14), what can you learn about who you are? What did you love, what moved your heart, what does it say about who you are?





Chapter 2

THE MYSTERY OF YOUR LIFE

LIFE CAN ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD;
BUT IT MUST BE LIVED FORWARD.

–Søren Kierkegaard

When I was a kid, I loved mysteries. I loved to take things apart to see how they worked; I loved to read “whodunit” novels and guess who “did it;” I loved to lay in the grass, stare at the sky, and wonder how those planes stayed up there; I loved to wander the countryside with other boys looking for buried treasure; and I loved to wonder what my life would look like when I grew up.

As an adult, however, mystery became less fun. Mystery developed into a burden. I wondered how to raise my kids well—and the burden of possible failure was

oppressive. “I should know this by now.” The mystery of learning my career was overwhelmed by the fear of failure and potential dismissal. “I should know this by now.”

But every once in a while the wonder of mystery reawakened. On a business trip in 1985 I read Robert Ludlum’s *Bourne Identity*. I was captivated by the story of the amnesia victim piecing together clues to figure out who he really was. I wondered what that would feel like.

In some ways, we are all like that amnesia victim; we are all piecing together clues to figure out who we really are. God has “prepared us for this moment,” and it is helpful to examine our lives to understand what God has been nurturing in our hearts.



List a few “mysteries” you enjoyed as a child (like reading a whodunit, figuring out a crossword puzzle, taking something apart, going on a treasure hunt, learning to play a musical instrument, etc):

What was it about those mysteries (or wonders) that particularly intrigued you?



What are some of the “mysteries” you face now in your life that do not bring enjoyment (like the “mystery” of balancing the budget, or how to lovingly relate to your spouse, or trying to figure out your career).

The questions, *What is my calling?* and *What I am supposed to be doing?* reside in every heart. These questions are often surrounded by internal or external pressures. It's helpful to understand the pressures that bear on our hearts because they can undermine our ability to "hear" our life and to hear God's voice.



What pressures, expectations, fears, accusations, and anxieties do you experience surrounding your search for your calling?

- I need to know my calling by the time I graduate.
- I should know my calling by now.
- I'm running out of time.
- My spouse is going to give up on me soon if I don't figure this out.
- I don't have many more false-starts left.
- I think God is getting a little fed-up with me.
- I fear I might run out ahead of Jesus.
- I've got to get this exactly right.
- I don't see any way to make money with my calling.
- I don't want to live a self-centered life.
- I will be held accountable for what I do with what God has given me, and I'm scared.
- The door of opportunity may close soon, or it seems to have already closed.
- I hate my work; I've got to find something else.

Read the beginning of chapter 2 (page 37 to the bottom of page 41).



The apostle Paul, having been given insight into the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:3–4), said, “All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely” (1 Cor. 13:12 NLT). Since this was true of Paul, then we can relax a bit not knowing everything about our lives and calling.

The tension, as Søren Kierkegaard wrote, is that “life can only be understood backward; but it must be lived forward.” The understanding that we gain by looking back on life is invaluable, but it will not answer all our questions regarding our intended future.

Our present and future life will always be filled with mystery. But many things in our past, that seemed purposeless at the time, may now be understandable as we look back.



What things happened to you in the past that still cause you to wonder, “What was that about?” or “Why did God allow that to happen?” or “What good could possibly come out of that?” or “Where was God in this?”

A job or position that you were let go from:

A job or position that you were not given:

A talent, skill or ability that was never acknowledged, validated or rewarded:

A hard, prolonged season in your life (loss, isolation, suffering, dryness):

A situation (work, ministry or relationship) that repeated itself time and time again:

Read the rest of chapter 2 (from the bottom of page 41 to 49).



Mystery is something to be embraced, journeyed through, and enjoyed. It's not that mystery can never be explained but rather that mystery unfolds—not all at once, but a little at a time.

There is always joy when we discover something:

- ▶ A great book
- ▶ A great movie
- ▶ A great restaurant
- ▶ A great view
- ▶ A great ice cream flavor
- ▶ A great vacation spot
- ▶ A great friend
- ▶ A great church
- ▶ A great apartment or house
- ▶ A great used car



Some searches are fun, perhaps looking for a new car or trying out a new restaurant. We like the search and the joy of discovery. But for other things, we often dislike the hunt, the search, or the pursuit. Why is this?

- ▶ Perhaps we start with the shame (or disappointment) that we should have discovered this already.
- ▶ It may be that we assume we won't find what we are looking for. We hear the accusation, "You're going to end up empty handed once again"
- ▶ Perhaps we fear that our pursuit will be unsuccessful again, proving what we most fear about our self, "I'm not smart enough," "There is nothing good or important for me," or "God is holding back on me."
- ▶ It may be the fear of not liking what we will discover.

If we knew for certain that our search for what we need to discover will be successful at the right time, and that it will be precisely what we want, would we enjoy the hunt? Absolutely!



Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 7:7–8: “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened’ (NLT).



What do you fear most when it comes to “asking, seeking and knocking”?



We are not to occasionally ask, seek, and knock. Our life is to be one of continually asking, seeking, and knocking. We are to be explorers not tourists, archaeologists not museum visitors. Our life should be continual shouts of ‘I found another one!’

God is there with new revelations about our calling in all of our moments—in the times when we feel most alive, free, and ourselves as well as the times when we feel unfulfilled or hurt or lost. He is always whispering to us, ‘For I know the plans that I have for you ... plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.... You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart’ (Jer. 29:11–13 NASB).



Describe the moments in your life that come to mind as you look back at these past experiences.

Times when you felt most alive, free and yourself:

What was it about those moments that made you feel alive and free?

Times when you felt unfulfilled, unmotivated, lost, hurt:

What was it about those moments that made you lose heart?





Chapter 3

FINDING YOUR ORIENTATION

THERE IS NOT A HEART BUT HAS ITS MOMENTS OF
LONGING, YEARNING FOR SOMETHING BETTER,
NOBLER, HOLIER THAN IT KNOWS NOW.

–Henry Ward Beecher

When I first took flying lessons, I learned how to fly a plane in “VMC,” or Visual Meteorological Conditions. That just means I could see outside for reference. I could see the horizon and that helped me fly the plane. I could see if I was turning or going up or going down simply by looking outside of the windshield.

The next step for me was learning to fly in “IMC,” or Instrument Meteorological Conditions. That meant I couldn’t see outside because I was in fog or mist, or I was in

the clouds. I didn't have an outside reference point, like the horizon.

Actually, you fly the plane the same way in both conditions. You use the same movements to make the plane go up or down, or to the right or to the left.

The difference between the two conditions is what you use to interpret your current flying situation. It's odd, but when you are flying in the clouds, you really don't know if you are climbing, or turning, or heading straight down; and what your body tells you is often wrong.

You can't fly by the "seat of your pants" because the seat of your pants tells you the plane is turning left (or right or up or down) when the plane may be straight and level. Our normal inner ear equilibrium is out of balance.

So learning to fly in the clouds means learning to interpret instruments on the instrument panel. And it means learning to trust them and not trust the seat of your pants. If you feel that plane is "going up" but the instruments say it isn't, you follow the instruments. When flying in the clouds, not trusting your instruments is dangerous and sometimes deadly.

We also need to learn how to live our lives when we are in the fog. There are many methods of interpreting our lives; some are good and some are unsafe.

Read pages 53 to the top of page 56

The world around us offers many ideas on how to interpret our life. It proposes a "context" for how the world works and what life is about. These interpretations and contexts influence how we process our lives and circumstances. Sometimes we are conscious of the affect and sometimes we aren't. But wherever the world's interpretation influences us, it also deeply affects how we live our lives.



Name the interpretations and contexts about the world that come to your mind—they are probably the "sentences" that affect your thinking and faith.

I'll start with a few I can think of:

- If it's to be, it's up to me
- Life is what you make of it
- When you die, it's all over
- What goes around, comes around
- You play the cards you were dealt
- You have to make something of your life
- If you work hard, you can get just about anything you want
- Some are just born lucky
- No one will ever truly know me
- It's all going to burn
- Don't rearrange furniture on a sinking ship
- Money is the root of all evil
- Everything is chance
- There is no rhyme or reason to this world
- God controls everything
- There is nothing I can do
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Read page 56 to the middle of page 63



If we visited a Blockbuster together, and I asked you to find a story that best represents the story you feel you are living, what section of the store would you start looking in, and what movie might you choose?

- Action and adventure. Movie: _____
- Drama. Movie: _____
- Comedy. Movie: _____
- Sci-fi and fantasy. Movie: _____
- Animation. Movie: _____
- Horror. Movie: _____
- Family and kids. Movie: _____
- Mystery and suspense. Movie: _____
- Romance. Movie: _____
- Documentary. Movie: _____
- War. Movie: _____



Why did you choose the genre and movie that you did; what was it about that genre and that movie that you feel represents your life?

Honestly, have you seen your life more as being on a cruise ship or battleship?



Most of us live under the illusion of the first story, while assenting to the reality of the second story. As believers, we say we understand that there is a great battle between the kingdoms—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. But we live as if we were civilians and believe the battle to be an unthreatening distance away. And so we have made our mission the quality of our lives and the controlling of external factors. We have made our lives about being on a vacation cruise liner, rather than about realizing we are on a battleship heading toward a great mission.

The person we are today has been influenced—if not defined—by the things that have happened to us. These are the things that God wants to heal or hone. We must not let the world define us, nor can we let our lives and thoughts be conformed to it.

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will
be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good,
pleasing and perfect will. (Rom. 12:2 NIV)*



We need to be aware of the defining moments throughout our lives; the people that entered our story and their deposits or withdrawals; the moments when we were most alive and the times we felt wholly lost; the things we have dreamed about and the things we most feared; the stories and the toys we loved as children. All of these various aspects and themes are a part of our unfolding story and are meant to bring revelation to who we are. They are not random and trivial quirks; they are *you*.



People, events, and circumstances have influenced our lives. Let's examine some of these influences to see their impact in our lives.

Who are the people that touched your life positively?

Who?

How did they effect you?

_____	_____

_____	_____

_____	_____

_____	_____

_____	_____

_____	_____

Who are the people that touched your life negatively?

Who?

How did they effect you?

<hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

What events or circumstances had a significant impact on you?

Event	What was its effect on you?
<hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Read middle of page 63 to the bottom of page 67



At this early point in the book—the third of ten chapters—what would you say you most want to do right now? Really. If you inherited a fortune, and God, your parents, your spouse said to you, “Do what every makes you happy AND feels important to you,” what would you do?



What you are supposed to do is what you most want to do! Or as Os Guinness wrote, ‘Instead of, ‘You are what you do,’ calling says: ‘Do what you are.’

“God must speak ... because He promised to “instruct you and teach you in the way you should go” (Ps. 32:8). We must listen because we are to be His followers and disciples. As Scripture says, “[God] wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught” (Isa. 50:4).

Read the bottom of page 67 to page 70.



Was there ever a time in your life when you knew God was speaking to you—to you, not to those around you, but specially to you—about who you are and the nature of your calling? When was it and what did you hear God say?



Earlier in this chapter you picked a movie genre and movie that you feel represents your life. What can you learn about yourself from that choice of movie and movie genre?



Looking back at the people, events, and circumstances that affected you, what do you feel is most true of you, and what do you feel might have been a worldly influence or affect?

Most True: _____

Worldly affect: _____

As you consider what you would most want to do (if given a fortune), ask yourself, “Why is it that I would want to do that?”





Chapter 4

THE GLORY OF YOUR LIFE

NOW WITH GOD'S HELP I SHALL BECOME MYSELF.

—Søren Kierkegaard

I was once talking with a small group of friends about “the glory of our lives,” and there was resistance. And I understand the resistance. We’ve been taught to give all glory to God; so to claim a glory in our lives almost feels like stealing glory from God.

Even though it does no such thing.

One woman asked if she could explain it in her own words. She commented,

“Could it be that we are like a painting—the Mona Lisa, and God is the master artist—like Leonardo da Vinci. If that’s the case, then the glory we have as the

masterpiece of an artist doesn't rob that artist of any glory. In fact, that means we are simply an expression of the artist's glory."

I think her metaphor explains this concept. We are the result of the creative work of God. We are His art. In fact Ephesians 2:10 says that we are his masterpiece,

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

If we are his artwork—his masterpiece—then hiding “our glory” is a way of putting a sheet over a priceless work of art. In fact, covering our glory is way of robbing God of His glory, since part of His glory is expressed through us being who He made us to be.

We can also take joy in discovering the glory in another person, seeing each other as the masterpieces of the great Artist. Like archeologists, we hunt for treasure more rare than the Mona Lisa and more glorious than Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.

Recognizing the glory in another person is important and helpful for at least two reasons. First, what we recognize in another sometimes offers a hint of our own glory; we sometimes see in others the very thing we long for in ourselves. In addition, seeing the glory of another gives us an opportunity to validate and clarify that glory for them; they may be blind to the very effect they bring to others, and we can help.

In light of the value of seeing glory in others, name a few situations when you experienced the glory of another person—when their words or actions were particularly weighty or extraordinary.



We were created to display God's glory. But how does a person do that? It's not easy, but it is simple: We live in and live out the splendor God has uniquely given us. We own the glory of our lives. We live out the extraordinary-ness in the ordinary things of life.



Does the idea that “your life has a glory” make you uncomfortable? If your answer is yes, why?



If so, it's understandable. So often, the deepest desires of our hearts are discounted. We have been encouraged to wear this false cloak of humility, believing that there is no splendor, beauty, or weightiness to our lives—that the more we dislike our lives on this earth, the greater the degree of our servanthood and the greater the purity of our love for God.

Your calling is to let the world around you experience the glory of your life. Made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), every human being has a calling ... a glory to their lives, though perhaps marred and enslaved. It is for this that Jesus came—to heal our hearts and set us free from what imprisons us so that we would become a display of God's splendor (Isa. 61:3–4).



To the best of your ability at this moment, try to answer these questions:

My calling (my particular effect, brilliance, splendor, weightiness) is:



My roles (son, daughter, husband, wife, father, mother, employer, employee) are:



My present assignment (where I am currently giving a large amount of my time) is:



God also gives us assignments—to individuals, groups, or places that need our particular splendor, brilliance, abundance, or where we will receive needed training. For some it may be primarily at home with children—for others, in an organization or corporation, paid or unpaid. Whatever the assignment, it is given to us to help fulfill our roles and calling. For God will not require both from you and put them in opposition to each other. So, when an opportunity presents itself that needs the glory of our lives but will detract from our roles or that pays well but doesn't require the essence of who we are, we need to seriously pause and ask God if it is an assignment, a distraction, or just a rogue opportunity.



Does your current “assignment” help you fulfill your roles AND require the glory of your life to some degree? If so, list the assignment(s) and describe what part of the glory of your life is (or could be) expressed:



By staying aware that life consists of our calling, our roles, and our assignments, we can be free from the fear of having to create a career path or being stuck in a field of work/experience or limiting titles. We can move as God directs us and as our lives change, take the effect of our lives wherever we go. This is living in your calling.



What have you felt compelled to do, or instinctually moved to do, in just about every situation? What is it about you that you have to occasionally turn-off because it is always on?



You see, your calling or glory is in you. It's not something you go get, like a degree, position, or title. It's already written in your life, though it can and must be developed. Your glory compels you to do something in every situation, a compulsion that you can choose to go with, hold back from, or ignore. It is what your heart almost always sees, knows, notices, wants to do, or is burdened by. Your glory is written on your heart, and you must go there to discover and understand it.



Given what you know today, what glory or brilliance do you believe you bring?



Given what you know today of your Calling, what are ways you can bring it into every aspect of your life, including your Roles and your Assignments?



Summarize once more; what deep compelling have you experienced over much of your life?





Chapter 5

THE PATH TO YOUR GLORY

SOMETHING HIDDEN IS ABOUT TO BE FOUND; SOMEONE
LEGENDARY IS ABOUT TO BE DISCOVERED; SOMETHING
EXTRAORDINARY IS ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE.

–From the movie trailer for *Finding Forrester*

I [Sam] began flying lessons in 1997. These lessons taught me to take off and land, to navigate using aviation charts, and to communicate with air traffic control. On my second flight, my instructor Jayne pulled the throttle to idle and announced that my engine had just “died.” She then showed me how to glide to a safe landing area like a field or a road.

Soon a pattern emerged. She’d kill the engine, and we’d practice standard engine-

restart procedures, and I'd look for a place to land. Then we would circle down to the landing site until Jayne said we would have made it (or not). Then she'd re-throttle the engine, we'd climb, and we'd review what I had done.

Jayne drilled the engine-out procedures so thoroughly into me that I could have done them in my sleep, though I never tried.

Jayne taught me to fly through a series of tests. The nature of these tests—repetition and reflection—taught me to fly. Educators call these tests Formative Tests. They are educational methods that train us in the midst of the test. Formative Tests teach us today how to avoid disqualification tomorrow.

When most of us think of “tests,” however, we picture Summative Tests. Summative Tests measure how much we have already learned, such as midterms, finals, and college entrance exams (the ACT or SAT).

While Formative Tests are designed to qualify us for the future, one could say that Summative Tests are designed to disqualify us, as in “My SAT score was low so I failed to get into Harvard.”

Most people consider Christianity to be one large Summative Test, sort of a huge College entrance exam; a big moral test which we repeatedly fail.

But it isn't.

God's tests are Formative Tests; he is forming us into who he designed us to be. Through “tests” he makes us more capable; he dismantles the false self and builds in us our truest calling. He broadens our shoulders and he strengthens our steps. He's teaching us to fly.



As you reflect on past “tests” in your life, what has been your heart's belief about the nature of those tests (i.e. have you felt you need to “pass” them or be disqualified, or have you felt they are punishment for past behavior, etc.)?



Why do you think that was your interpretation of those tests?

Reread chapter 5.

Throughout our life, we have been in a formation school in which God is developing our character and helping us discover our Calling. “We must take a journey in the ever-increasingness of our glory (2 Cor. 3:18).”



Scripture is the story of God searching for those He could entrust with the real power of their lives and His kingdom without it destroying them and others: “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him” (2 Chron. 16:9).

“It is important that we not mistake the process of “increasing” (2 Cor. 3:18; Ex. 23:30) and “strengthening” (2 Chron. 16:9) as God’s discipline, abandonment, a loss of time, or a lack of direction. It is quite the opposite.”



Name several difficult situations you’ve gone through—situations that you’ve probably described as awful, suffering, hardship, unfair, hurtful, betrayal, persecution or evil.

Situation 1: _____

What happened? _____

How did you survive it / what did you learn? _____

Situation 2: _____

What happened? _____

How did you survive it / what did you learn? _____

Situation 3: _____

What happened? _____

How did you survive it / what did you learn? _____

Situation 4: _____

What happened? _____

How did you survive it / what did you learn? _____



In summary, what training (strengthening, purifying, and understanding) did you gain from those past experiences?



There is a space in the world that is meant for you, and you alone, and awaits your glory. That place is written on your heart in the form of your desires and must be deciphered.





Chapter 6

THE BATTLE OVER YOUR CALLING

AS CHRISTIANS WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT
BY SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION TO
ACKNOWLEDGE THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION
AS THE TRUE NUCLEUS OF REALITY. HUMAN
ENDEAVOR IS A RELATED, BUT DEPENDENT,
OUTER LAYER. THIS, AT ANY RATE, IS WHAT
WE SAY. IN TRUTH MANY CHRISTIANS
HAVE BECOME PRACTICAL ATHEISTS.

–George Otis, Jr.

I [Sam] know a fifty-five year-old man who is a thoughtful, intelligent, engineer. He came to me because his wife and children despise him and he didn't know what to do. He told me his story.

When he was about five years-old, he desperately longed for a Red Flyer Wagon as a present for Christmas, but his parents were poor and couldn't afford it. He never got one.

He vividly remembers the pain of the disappointment, and he remembers saying to himself, "I'll never long for anything again; it just hurts too much."

Throughout his career he never tried for a promotion—in fact he turned down promotions for fear that he'd fail and be disappointed; he didn't try new hobbies (he always wanted to learn to sail) for fear that he'd be disappointed; and he taught his children to "keep their heads down" and "never take risks" because he feared the pain it might cause them.

Now his wife and children despise him as he sits at home watching television.

I tell this story to show how subtle and small an assault can be. Notice its simplicity. His parents were not disengaged or mean; they simply lacked money. The assault was not brutal or humiliating; it was merely a missing Christmas present fifty years ago.

And yet the message—"Don't long for anything, you may be disappointed"—has dominated the life of this thoughtful, intelligent man.

As I've gotten to know him, I see his great insight and compassion, but the simplest of assaults has kept him from offering them.

We have all had assaults on our hearts; some assaults have been brutal, harsh, and humiliating, and some assaults have been the simplest of whispers. And yet they can keep us from walking into the splendor and brilliance of who God has made us to be.



The first battle everyone encounters is the battle for life. There is the physical life and then there is the spiritual and soulful life.



Pretending a battle doesn't exist (or that everything is "okay") is not helpful. So, the first question has to be: In the battle to keep you away from spiritual and soulful life, where are you? Which of these stages are you in?

I'm looking for life outside of God

I'm still trying to figure out this God thing

I'm looking for God

I believe that Jesus sacrificed His life for me so that I could know God personally and so that I can be set free to live the rich life He gave me. I've prayed something similar to the prayer in that booklet:

"Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be."



If the Enemy is unsuccessful in stopping the seed of the kingdom of God from being planted in your heart with new life, then he will try to stop the seed from growing into its intended stature (an "[oak] of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor" [Isa. 61:3]) and from multiplying ("yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown" [Luke 8:8]).



We may ask ourselves, "Why do I keep doing that?" What are the things that you don't want to do, but you find yourself repeatedly doing anyway (i.e. bantering, joking, criticizing, disengaging, becoming angry, dominating, raising your voice, going silent, etc.)?

THE ASSAULT OF DISTANCING OR DEADENING

Read pages 110 to the middle of page 116 (The section on Distance)



Why are our deepest desires so hard to find? Distance. Something has caused us to keep our distance from our truest desires by making them feel unsafe or untrue. If you go back into a person's story, you can usually find their deepest desires and the assault against those desires—the words and actions that made those desires seem useless, foolish, or dangerous.

Certain things have happened to us which—in some way—colored or shaped our desires. They therefore have—in some way—defined our lives. These are painful or disillusioning events (or comments) that “taught” us something falsely about ourselves, the world, and God.



Name several defining moments in your life. Remember; do not calculate the magnitude of those moments on a “severity” scale. Just write down each event (comment, etc), and then write the “message” that comes from it.

Event/comment/wound: _____

The message it delivered: _____

Event/comment/wound: _____

The message it delivered: _____

Event/comment/wound: _____

The message it delivered: _____

Event/comment/wound: _____

The message it delivered: _____

Event/comment/wound: _____

The message it delivered: _____

Event/comment/wound: _____

The message it delivered: _____



I have met many men and women who have something weighty and beautiful to offer. It's on the tip of their tongue or fingertips, but they can't offer it because of a fear that was created years or decades earlier, largely unknown to them but nonetheless present and controlling. We label and excuse this person as shy or not having much to offer. I have also met many who, through their words and actions, are asking for or demanding acceptance and validation in exchange for their offering. We label these people as controlling, draining, or high maintenance. Both types are people who possess a splendor, abundance, beauty, and weightiness ... but that splendor has been infected or contaminated by the presumed failures or pain in their lives.



Which one of these types do you lean more toward?

- The person who is more quiet, withholding, extremely careful, shy, hidden, always deferring, always waiting to be asked before offering.
- The person who is more loud, domineering, aggressive, insisting, taking-charge, interrupting.

Can you see why you answered the way you did based on the “defining moments” and their “message” that you listed above?

THE ASSAULT OF DIMINISHMENT

Read pages 116 to the middle of page 121 (the section on Diminishment)



As we begin to discover (or more accurately rediscover) our heart’s desires and embrace them, the attack will likely turn to the diminishment (self-diminishment) of your glory. The Enemy’s intention is to get you to view your weightiness as less than it is and therefore convince you not to offer it.



What statements of diminishment have you heard most of your life (probably mostly unspoken)?

You have nothing to offer.

You don’t know what you’re talking about.

People don’t care what you think.

You’re too old.

You’re too young and inexperienced.

You'll only make things worse.

You're not trained or educated or qualified enough.

That will never work.

THE ASSAULT OF DISDAIN

Read pages 121 to 122 (The section on Disdain)



Even if we refuse to be distanced from our hearts and its desires or to accept the diminishing accusations of the Enemy, the Enemy will still try to take us out by getting us to disdain the glory that we have begun to see and own.

Have you stepped out to offer your strength, beauty, and abundance, and consequently you have gotten hurt? It's not so much the difficulty or unpredictability that these moments bring; it's the accompanying tormenting message. Messages like, "It's not worth it," or "This is what makes people not want to be around you," or "You do more harm than good" ... and so, sadly, we are driven in the opposite direction and walk away from those things that make us who we are.



Describe a few situations where you offered your "seeing", brilliance, or weightiness; and you were rejected, ignored, put down, or ridiculed:

What was the overall message to your heart from these situations? Or, what did you “hear” about yourself (like, “It’s simply not worth it to offer ‘that’ again.”)?

THE ASSAULT OF DISQUALIFICATION

Read pages 123 to the middle of 125 (the section on Disqualification)



Now, if all of this attack and assault does not stop us from offering our glory to others, then the Enemy plays his wild card—disqualification. He whispers in our ear, I know what you did; you blew it; you’re a disgrace; it’s too late for you; you crossed the line; it’s over.



Is there some area of your life that the enemy uses as “proof” and “justification” of your disqualification in the work of the Kingdom of God?



Have you brought those things under the work of Christ by confessing and releasing it to Him or are you so ashamed of it that you’re trying to handle it yourself?



When we sin, our solution is still Jesus Christ—all that was accomplished for us through His death, resurrection, and ascension. Let sin drive us back to God’s love, sacrifice, and mercy—and His pursuit of us. Let it cause us to remember, once again, our unequivocal need for Him—for forgiveness, deliverance, life, and freedom. And let this remembrance increase our love for Jesus Christ (He who is forgiven much, loves much [Luke 7:47]) and our conviction to live as a display of God’s splendor (Isa. 61:2–3).



Read the scripture passages at the end of the chapter (pages 129-131) and pick two or three that especially capture you in this moment of your life.



Why did those passages speak to you above the other passages? What about them did you need to hear today?



The enemy wants to keep us from being who we truly are, a brilliant masterpiece of God. Sometimes he assaults our very glory (causing us to diminish it...) and sometimes he simply attacks our heart (making us fearful...).

Review the assaults on your heart (from above). What do you begin to see as your glory—the truest you—as you review the assaults on your heart?





Chapter 7

AWAKENING YOUR DESIRES

THE SECRET OF A GREAT LIFE IS OFTEN A MAN'S
SUCCESS IN DECIPHERING THE MYSTERIOUS SYMBOLS
VOUCHSAFED TO HIM, UNDERSTANDING THEM AND SO
LEARNING TO WALK IN THE TRUE PATH.

–Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Several years ago I [Sam] was in a group of four men discussing how deep desires can reveal our Calling. One of the men—let's call him John—was recently retired. As we discussed desires, John blurted out, "I love to fish. Always have. I think my Calling is to fish!"

After a pause, another man in the group asked, “Uh, why do you love to fish? What is it about fishing that stirs you so much?”

John had already told us his life story. At the age of five, he had been abandoned by his father. He never seen his father again; his mother never remarried; and he had felt fatherless his entire life.

John answered, “You know I was raised without a father. My heart goes out to fatherless boys. In my neighborhood live several single mothers with many fatherless boys. Whenever I fish, I take a few of the boys. I teach them how to hook a worm and land a fish.”

Someone in the group quietly said, “John, I don’t think your calling is to fish. I think your calling is to be a father to the fatherless.”

This simply, stunning statement moved every man to tears. John was a father to the fatherless. That was his deepest desire. The discovery moved us.

John called a month later. He said, “Sam, I just discovered my real calling; I’m a car mechanic.” Inwardly I groaned, “Two steps forward, one step backward.”

Then he laughed, “Just joking. I found out that my ‘boys’ had never changed a tire. So I bought a jack. Every tire on my truck as been changed at least forty times this past week. And I’m teaching the boys carpentry and plumbing. I’m a father to the fatherless. And I love it.”

Notice two things about this story. First, John’s desire to fish was not his deepest desire. His deepest desire moved him. He discovered this desire when he—along with close friends—examined the desires beneath his desires.

Secondly, after discovering his deeper desire, he acted on it more intentionally. Fathering boys while fishing wasn’t enough. He fathered them with carpentry, plumbing, and with a listening ear.

As we discover our deepest desires, we’ll be moved with joy, and we’ll bring it everywhere. We may already be doing “it” in a few places—perhaps even unconsciously—but soon we’ll bring everywhere.

And we’ll love it.

DECIPHERING

Read pages 135 to the middle of page 142



God has given us a road map for the life each of us is meant to live. But the map is contained in a place we seldom go—our hearts— and it is written in “cryptic form” and “mysterious symbols,” symbols that we seldom try to decipher.

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4). David’s expression, the desires of your heart, literally means “that which the deepest, truest part of you continually seeks or prays for.



Name several defining moments in your life. Remember; do not calculate the magnitude of those moments on a “severity” scale. Just write down each event (comment, etc), and then write the “message’ that comes from it.

Father, I would love to _____

Please let me, please help me _____

Or... _____



What were you doing when you felt most alive, most aware of God, happiest, most fulfilled, felt God’s pleasure, or most yourself?



The realization of your calling is the fulfillment of your truest desires.

Because your glory is so significant to the Greater Story that we live in, much of what you have experienced in life has been an assault against your desires in order to shut them down or distance yourself from them. Most people I know would say that they really have no idea what they want, that they don't feel deeply about anything, and that the only thing they know they feel is lost, confused, and angry.

There is a universal process that God takes us through with our desires in the development of our glory: He awakens desire, then He deepens desire, then He fulfills desire.

DEEPEN

Read pages 149 to 153



But awakened desire is not sufficient to explain our lives. The apostle Paul said that in order for us to “[bear] fruit in every good work” (Col. 1:10), we must have “spiritual wisdom and understanding” (v. 9). Often, our initial experience or understanding of our desires is not accurate. Desire is seldom what it first appears to be, so God must deepen our awakened desires.

In order to bring my desires to a place of greater clarity and purity, God caused me to live outside of them for a period of time.

We must stay in the hope and anticipation of what we will come to discover about our glory and about how our hearts will develop along the way.



List a set of times in your life when you knew what you wanted (desired), but your desires were unfulfilled at that time. These could include a missed position or job, a failed or delayed accomplishment, a lost opportunity, or a missed task or responsibility. In its absence—the failure to attain your desire—what did you learn about yourself and your desire?



Review your answers to the first two questions in this chapter (“what have you found yourself praying / asking...?” and “What were you doing when you felt most alive...?”). What are the common themes in your answers? And what about those themes seem to move you?



Review you answers to your favorite movies, books, historical character, etc. What are the common themes in your answers? And what about those themes seem to move you?



Review your answers to unfulfilled desires. Are there common traits? What do you learn of yourself?





Chapter 8

INTERPRETING YOUR DESIRES

LISTEN TO YOUR LIFE. SEE IT FOR THE
FATHOMLESS MYSTERY THAT IT IS. IN THE
BOREDOM AND PAIN OF IT NO LESS THAN
IN THE EXCITEMENT AND GLADNESS.

–Frederick Buechner

Read pages 157 to the middle of page 159.



God will guide us through deciphering the desires of our hearts. Jesus said, “Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.... The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart” (Luke 6:44–45). The good we are to bring to the world is in our hearts, a treasure to be uncovered. Our glory can be recognized.



Did anyone ever tell you what they thought you should do (accurately or inaccurately) or what your life should look like? What did they say, and what reasons did they give?

STRONGEST AND MOST CONSISTENT DESIRES

Read pages 159 to the middle of page 162.



What you were created to do is what you most want to do. Your calling in life comes in the form of your strongest desire, your truest preference, and is often initially experienced as your deepest curiosity.



The following questions may require looking through your book shelves or digging through your file drawers.

What articles have you read and saved (or what web pages have you bookmarked)? What are they about?



What books do you tend to purchase and read? What are they about?



What type (thematically) of TV shows or documentaries do you enjoy?



What classes did you find most interesting or engaging? What were they about?

Read pages 162 to the middle of page 164.



What is true of you has always been true of you. What you were created to do has been in your DNA from the beginning. There is something unique that you have been able to see or understand or do throughout your entire life, regardless of its level of development.



Has anyone ever said to you something like:

As long as I've know you, you've always been curious about...

or

As long as I've know you, you've always talked about...

or

As long as I've know you, you've always been good at...

or

As long as I've know you, you've always noticed...

What have been your favorite stories and movies? What are the common themes What characters do you love the most, and why?

Movie

Theme

Character

Read pages 164 to the middle of page 168.



Your experience or personal history is a significant informant concerning your desires.



Things I have done that brought me joy, fulfillment, energy:

Circle the key words in this column.



Things I have done that I did not enjoy, that drained life out of me:

Circle the key words in this column.



What are the three or four words that best describe what you love doing, or what brings you life, or that gives you a sense of fulfillment?



What are the three or four words that describe what is life draining and unfulfilling for you regardless of how well you do them?

Read pages 168 to the end of the chapter.



Our glory is so personal to us, so “normal,” that we barely see it. We don’t see it as anything special or uncommon or extraordinary. Therefore we tend to overlook it, to dismiss it. We need others in our lives to spot our glory, to describe it, and to call it out.



Ask the following question of a few close friends or family members who know you well, “What do you see me bring to a person (or group or situation) that is weighty and particular to me?”

Asking this question of others may take the most courage of any exercise so far.



What are Your desires for me?



What are You up to with me right now?



What is most true about me?



Is there something that you have revealed to me that I have not yet recognized?



What do I need to know now about my desires, my life, my circumstances, my place?



Why have you placed the certain people in my life?



What season am I in right now? (Eccl. 3:1-8)

- A time to be still and rest, not making anything happen. What?

- A time to move, step out and try. What?

- A time for something to stop, die, or be removed. What?

- A time for something to begin, be created, and come to life.
What?

- A time for something to be healed. What?





Chapter 9

STRENGTH TO HANDLE YOUR WEIGHTINESS

WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF GREAT EVENTS AND LITTLE MEN.

—Winston Churchill

Read pages 175 to the middle of page 181.



For all of us, there are divine moments we were created for. Moments created for our contribution, moments needing our glory. But often we are not prepared for what will be required of us. We have underestimated the power of our lives and our role in the story He has planned for us. But Satan has not underestimated us—that is why he launches such a fierce assault against our hearts. And neither does God—that is why He must train us.



What would you tell God if He were to ask you what areas of your life need to be strengthened and honed so that you could powerfully and whole-heartedly bring the glory of your life to the world? Another way to ask this is, “What personal characteristics might be undermining your calling?”



List and describe the people who came into your life and positively impacted you.

Name: What did they impart to you? What were they like as a person?

<hr/>	<hr/>



What is your reaction to the word “ambition?” Does it have good or bad connotations? Do you think we should desire to be really good at something?



Is there something that you would really like to develop in, something you long to be excellent at?



Why? What would be gained if you became an expert in this area?

Read from the middle of page 181 to the middle of page 190.



“Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment” (Rom. 12:3)? The antidote for conceit or arrogance is not self-deprecation; it is instead sober judgment. Sobriety is a fascinating phrase and metaphor to use. When a person is intoxicated (under the influence of alcohol) he tends to either overestimate his abilities, intelligence, appearance, and impact—or underestimate them.



Answer this question from a heart-felt level, not an intellectual or theological level:

Do you have something significant to offer to the world?

- Yes
- Sort-of
- No

True humility owns and offers who you are—your glory. Humility entertains neither a diminished nor an exaggerated sense of who you are and what you offer.

The counterfeit to Humility is shame, and shame believes you are nothing and have nothing to offer.



Which is more dominant in your life right now—or what is more present day to day: humility or shame?



When was the last time you asked someone for true guidance in your life (not mere affirmation of your current actions, plans or thinking)? How did you ask? Who did you ask? How hard was it to ask?



The following exercise is a challenge, not a question.

Think of several people who know you deeply, who you've "lived life with" over the last few years. Then ask them these questions:

- ▶ What is my effect on you?
- ▶ What am I like to be with?
- ▶ What am I like when I'm not "myself"?
- ▶ What do you think I'm not aware of about myself?

Read from the middle of page 181 to the middle of page 190.



Without gentleness, little of what we genuinely have to offer will be received.

There is a counterfeit to gentleness, and it is fear. The fear to offer yourself—what you can do, what you see, hear, know. It's the fear that you might "do it wrong" or that you will be ignored, rejected, ridiculed. In fear you do and say nothing, and this can be misread as gentleness, when in fact it is the simple absence of your weighty presence.

If you take the challenge offered above, if you ask those questions of few friends, it will help you discover if you live in gentleness or fear.

Read from the bottom of page 190 to the middle of page 192.



To be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves, we must not be rash or hasty, impulsive or compulsive. In humility we can wait and watch for God's timing, His movement, and His intervention. In humility, we allow our hearts and the hearts of others to respond as they are able—as opposed to arranging, manipulating, demanding, and controlling the response of another.



How is your patience being tested at this point in your life? In what area(s) do you sense that patience required for you right now? Where do you have to endure waiting, delays, or difficulties?



In the situations above where “patience is tested” or “patience is required,” what do you think God is doing through the waiting, delays or difficulties?

- Timing – God is putting people and things in place.
- Development – God is providing you what will be needed but what you do not adequately possess yet.
- Patience – God is simply teaching you patience and trust.
- Honing – God is adjusting, correcting, and sharpening your ideas and desires.



Are there areas of waiting (delays or difficulties) where your heart has shifted from patience to resignation?

Read from the middle of page 192 to the end of the chapter.



It is in our day-to-day living that humiliation calls forth humility; that the fires of sorrow burn up shallowness; and that waiting, delay, and provocation cultivate patience.



Review the questions and exercise from above. What are the key character areas that you see God developing in you?



Why do you think he is working in those “development” areas; that is, what about those areas are keeping you from walking fully into expressing your glory to the world (i.e. shame or resignation is holding me back from offering; or pride or arrogance is undermining receipt of what you have to offer)?





Chapter 10

BETWEEN DESIRE AND FULFILLMENT

IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO BRING
EXCELLENCE TO MATURITY.

–Publius Syrus



Oswald Chambers wrote, “If the Spirit of God has stirred you, make as many things inevitable as possible, let the consequences be what they will.”



What has God been stirring in your heart?



What can you do to make those stirrings as inevitable as possible?



What is frightening about making those stirring inevitable?



I heard Graham Cook say that sometimes God will call you somewhere where your friends cannot go, and there He will provide new friends. This is so true—it's part of the journey. We cannot become what we need to be by remaining where and what we are. There is “a time to embrace and a time to refrain.”



Is there something that you need to “refrain” from; something whose season has come to an end (i.e. a ministry, group, board position, job, tradition, or commitment)?



Is there something that you need to “embrace;” something you now need to begin, step into, commit to, or build?



I believe that living like an artist means to create (to bring into form) that which is on your heart for the pure joy and curiosity of its potential beauty and benefit.

To live as an artist is to allow whatever it is that “works so powerfully” in you (Col. 1:29) to come out. To refuse to let your glory (your particular splendor, brilliance, abundance) be defined, valued, or constrained by others. To live as an artist means to develop your art through study, training, and experience with whatever time and resources you have, because you love it—not because others are asking for it or you are getting paid for it.



If you were given 6 months paid time off and had excess funds to invest in classes (or materials, training, coaching, experiences, certain settings, or equipment), what would you do? In other words, what is that something “in you” that you would you try, create or develop?



As our intimate ally, God is continually helping us discover more of our glory, developing us into the people who can offer that glory well and bringing us to points of alignment—moments when we must integrate our lives to our desires and to our development.



Chapter 11

CONNECTING THE DOTS

In the introduction to this Guidebook, we described Peter Blaber's great quote, "Collect the dots before you Connect the dots." We have spent the last ten chapters Collecting "dots" to help us understand our calling.

It's time to begin Connecting them.

CALLING



What you were created to do is revealed in the form of your desires. As we've already seen, "It is God who is producing in you both the desire and the ability to do what pleases him" (Phil. 2:13 ISV). You see, the really great news is that what you are supposed to do is what you most want to do! I may need to repeat that: What you are supposed to do is what you most want to do! Or as Os Guinness wrote, "Instead of, 'You are what you do,' calling says: 'Do what you are.'"

CONNECTING DOTS

Let's review some of the "dots" we've collected so far.

In the Guidebook Introduction, page 8, we asked you to describe the credential or title you would like after your name (like, Gary Barkalow, Personal Calling). Rewrite that title here—updating it if the title is clearer now:

Name

Title

In chapter 3, page 35, what did you hear God say about who you are, the nature of your Calling?

Is there any way that word has become clearer? If so, how?

In chapter 3, page 36, you described what you would do with your life if you were given a fortune. Summarize what you wrote, updating if it is clearer now:

In chapter 3, page 40, what did you say was your Calling as you understood it?

In chapter 4, page 50, what are the top three to five themes or aspects of past jobs, tasks (etc) that you loved?

In chapter 7, pages 67-71, what are the top three to five themes of the movies, books, and speakers (etc) that moved or spoke to you?

Review all your answers in the Guidebook chapter 8:

What have been your strongest and most consistent desires?

What words most stir or reflect your hearts deepest desires?

What did you hear from God about who you are?

In January 2012, Gary and I [Sam] met with a friend for our annual Noble Heart planning. During the meeting, we asked each other to summarize our personal Calling so we could better integrate our individual Calling into The Noble Heart.

One of us began (I won't say which!) by saying, "I feel kind of awkward saying what my Calling is, but what I most deeply long for is to bring encouragement and clarity...."

The next man said, "Instead of saying what my Calling is, I find it most helpful to describe the four words that best express my passion, they are...."

Each man expressed his Calling, but each man began with a different opening sentence. Based on your answers above, we'd like you to write a paragraph description of what you think your calling is. You may be more comfortable with different opening sentences. Here are a few ways to begin:

- ▶ I most deeply long to be the kind of person that bring this affect,
_____.
- ▶ The three (four, five) words that most deeply express my hearts desire are _____ and this is why... _____.
- ▶ I am most deeply passionate about _____.
- ▶ I feel that my calling is _____.

You may have another way to summarize your Calling.

How does articulating your Calling feel? Scary? Embarrassing? I know both experiences.

More importantly, though, does this description resonate in your heart? Do you long to have this Calling? When we have a Calling we will always long for that Calling as well. That's why Gary wrote,



You see, the really great news is that what you are supposed to do is what you most want to do! I may need to repeat that: What you are supposed to do is what you most want to do! Or as Os Guinness wrote, "Instead of, 'You are what you do,' calling says: 'Do what you are'"



Chapter 12

REALIGNMENT

When people ask about their Calling or life purpose, they frequently follow their questions with, “I just want to know what to do,” or “I want to know my life matters,” or “I want to offer something significant to the world.”

We want to live life differently.

Knowing our calling brings life change. We like to call this, Realignment. We re-align our lives to be in line with our discovered calling our developing character.

God provides direction in many ways. Sometimes he provides a word to us (by scripture, in prayer, or through a brother or sister). God told Abraham to leave the land of Ur and he spoke to Moses from the fiery bush. We like this kind of direction!

God also provides direction through external circumstance. Joseph went to Egypt because of external circumstances (which were pretty brutal). We hear of people laid off of their jobs who later say it was the best thing for them.

There is a third way God provides direction; it's the direction of a deepened heart. As we come to know our hearts, we are actually reading a blueprint from God. In our hearts he is describing our calling, and in our hearts he tells us who we are to be.

REALIGNMENT AND WALKING INTO OUR CALLING



Frederick Buechner wrote, "There is no event so commonplace but that God is present within it, always hiddenly, always leaving you room to recognize him or not to recognize him, but all the more fascinatingly because of that, all the more compellingly and hauntingly.... Listen to your life."

As we walk into our calling, we begin to act differently. We make changes. We realign our lives with the calling in our hearts.

Some of these changes are small. In the Guidebook chapter 7 we heard the story of a man who thought his Calling might be to fish only to discover that his Calling was to be a Father to the Fatherless.

He originally fathered fatherless boys occasionally, while fishing. Once he discovered his joy in being a father to the fatherless, he intentionally brought that passion in more ways. He taught the boys auto mechanics, carpentry, and personal discipline.

Even without major life changes, we can make small life realignments to bring our calling—the effect of our lives—into more places with more intentionality.



Reread your Calling summary that you wrote in the last chapter. Now take time to pray and reflect, asking God to reveal areas in your current life that you can bring more of your effect:

Family: _____

Work: _____

Small Group: _____

Church/ministry: _____

Volunteer position: _____

Neighborhood: _____

Other _____:

We can begin to walk into our calling now—today—with more intentionality.

REALIGNMENT AND OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Various obstacles to our calling may drag us down—sapping energy and strength, or simply creating barriers. They can hamper our effect. These obstacles may include assaults, marital or family problems, or character struggles (resignation, selfish ambition, shame, fear).

Reread your description of defining moments in your life (Guidebook chapter 6, pages 55 and 56). Prayerfully consider each Event/comment/wound. Ask God and your heart if any of these messages still have a hold in your heart.

Also reflect on messages of Dimishment, Disdain, or Disqualification that may still have a hold on you (see pages 57 to 60 of the Guidebook).

List the messages which still significantly affect your life:

Message: _____

Message: _____

Message: _____

As we realign our lives with the calling and character God is giving us, let us also take steps toward freedom. Consider sharing these “messages” with a few close friends. Together pray and decide what you may need to get free. You may simply need time. You certainly need truth, and perhaps you need help from friends or a professional counselor. Together with your friends, decide what you need.

And go for that realignment.

REALIGNMENT AND MAJOR CHANGE

Scripture says there is a time for everything, a time to mend, a time to tear down, and a time to build up (see Ecc. 3:1-9).

A time to mend

Do you know areas in your life which need mending? It could be marriage issues, family or work relationships, or simply bad habits. Consider taking these areas to God, to friends, or even a counselor:

Marriage: _____

Relationships (children/family/work): _____

Habits: _____

A time for tearing down

As we realign our lives with Calling and Character, we inevitably find areas that need to be dismantled or torn down. I [Sam] was a worship leader since I was fifteen years old. And I loved it. A few years ago—after nearly forty years leading worship—something strange happened. I began dreading attending the meetings. It sucked the life out of me.

As I prayed, I felt God say that a new phase of my life was beginning. And it would begin as I let go. God wanted to give me something, but I needed to let go of other things.

I often hear men and women talk about life draining services that they've been offering for years. Perhaps you have some of those in your life. I recently spoke with my sister. She belongs to a large church and was asked to be on the building committee. After three years she has decided, SHE HATES IT! She hates every

meeting, she feels unable to contribute, she dreads going to meetings, and she is affected for days after the meeting. It simply isn't her heart.

I asked if she has considered quitting, and she said, "What? But they need me. They asked me to be on it." I asked her if they wanted the true her to be on it, or did they want her to be someone she wasn't. She said they were asking her to be something she wasn't. She decided, "I want to be the person God wants me to be, not the person someone else wants me to be." She quit, although she was scared.

Are there areas in your life which drain your heart, or areas where you are asked be someone other than God called you to be, or areas from which you know God has released you? Maybe he has released you; he may be asking you to let go so you can step into something new.

Where might God be asking you to let go or to dismantle?

A service: _____

A small group: _____

Something at work: _____

Other: _____

A time to build

Finally, where is God asking you to build? What has been stirring in your heart about your calling? What is compelling to you?

Walking into our Calling means letting go of burdens that drag; and it means dismantling heart draining activities; and it means building something new. It means going somewhere you have never been before. It means building and releasing.

So what are specific new realignments, new ways to express your passion? List specifics

below. It may be starting to write, or working in a soup kitchen, or finding places which need your clarity, or finding people who need encouragement.

Where: _____

What will you offer: _____

When I [Sam] took flying lessons, I had to study textbooks for hours on end, and I had to learn airplane maneuvers (again, for hours on end). I took written, oral, and practical tests. Finally the day came to get my license. An FAA appointed tester grilled me in an office, and then she took me on a two hour flight where she tested me in a multitude of maneuvers.

When we finally landed, she leaned over to me, shook my hand, and said, *“Congratulations. You now have a license to learn.”*

I've never forgotten those wise words. Getting a license meant I was free now to begin walking into—actually flying into—a whole new world. And it meant a whole new kind of learning, the learning of being who I had become.

So, congratulations on finishing this Guidebook. You now have a license to learn. It is now time to begin living a new life, filled with the power that God so powerfully works in us. It's time to live in our Calling.

It's time to fly.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked AB are taken from The Amplified Bible. Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. Copyright © 2000; 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked GW are taken from GOD'S WORD®. Copyright 1995 God's Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ISV are taken from the Holy Bible: International Standard Version®. Copyright © 1996-2008 by The ISV Foundation. All rights reserved internationally. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.